

Date: November 15, 2019

To: Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee

From: Kristen Bonner, RN, 406.591.6075, kristen.bon@riverstonehealth.org

RE: Testimony

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee, I am Kristen Bonner, RN at RiverStone Health, Yellowstone County's public health department.

I work with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Child and Family Services division to help children in foster care or kinship care situations maintain or improve their health. I do this through a program we call KidsFirst. This program also exists in Cascade and Missoula Counties.

It is common for children in foster care to have undiagnosed or untreated health needs. KidsFirst Registered Nurses support foster and kinship families. We connect children in care to high quality medical and dental healthcare at RiverStone Health or to other community providers. I also assist families by:

- Gathering, reviewing and maintaining medical records, including immunizations
- Scheduling well-child medical, dental and vision exams
- Developing comprehensive care plans
- Making and coordinating referrals to healthcare specialists and community resources
- Providing developmental screenings, if requested and
- Answering general medical questions

Unfortunately, our KidsFirst program only provides minimal prevention and prevention is the key to keeping our families together. One important evidence-based strategy for supporting children and families and preventing foster care placements is through Universal Home Visiting that I hope you will have an opportunity to learn more about at your January meeting.

Thank you for your time.